

## INCARNATIONAL LIVING MINISTRY AS SERVICE LEARNING FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Magdalena Pranata Santoso  
Petra Christian University, Surabaya – Indonesia  
Email: [magdaps@peter.petra.ac.id](mailto:magdaps@peter.petra.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

*Urban modern life with the development of communication technology has led to moral and social problems for children, adolescents, youth, and even adults. This generation needs the language of genuine touch of love by creative actions to transform their lives for better life values. One model of urban ministries is incarnational living ministry, meaning to be a part of the community, in which we serve. Reflecting on the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ while He was on this earth, has given the idea of a ministry that implements service-learning for a social transformation. This service learning is done at Pelangi Kristus Christian School at Surabaya, Indonesia. The high school students serve children from poor families background surrounding the school. This service learning has a hope for the lives of those poor children may be transformed and they have better values in their lives. In another way, by serving them, the students may also grow in their character and personality. They learn to show compassion for other children's need and develop good attitudes and character as well. This incarnational living ministry through learning service has been part of the school curriculum for 8 years. Starting with 10 children at 2010, and after 8 years the number has reached approximately 120 children. Most of the parents of those children supported this service learning, and giving the witness that their children are growing intellectually, mentally, emotionally also spiritually. The incarnational living ministry as service learning, is an effective educational process for the students as well as for the the children they serve.*

**Keywords:** incarnational living ministry, urban ministry, social transformation.

### INTRODUCTION

Modern people living in urban areas face the reality of communication technology development that has caused moral and social problems for children, youth, and even adults. This generation needs a touch of true love language with creative action to transform their lives in order to create a humane society with values of life as human beings who interact and communicate better. The mission is no longer just to serve people who live in remote areas but also for serving at-risk children, who are living in vain due to the negative influence of

communication technology. This mission offers a value of life that does not focus on the pleasure of the eyes and lust. On the contrary, it aims to seek the goodness, the truth, and the values of humanity that express love with one another, so-called urban ministry.

## **THE NEED OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

We urgently need social transformation. Nurul Hidayah (2016) believes that Indonesia is experiencing a crisis, which in KBBI (Indonesian dictionary) means a dangerous, severe, critical, dismal situation in economic, moral, and so on. Indonesia is currently experiencing not only economic crisis, but also legal crisis, and the most at risk today is "moral crisis" among teenagers. It is very sad to see the fact of the observations and researches that have been conducted. The moral of adolescents from year to year continues to experience quality degradation in all aspects of morality, as seen in their speech, dress, attitude, etc. The findings of the study say that one of the factors that affect teenagers' moral is the flow of globalisation. The Indonesian nation whose culture is known as a polite and friendly country by outsiders is experiencing considerable moral degradation. Teenage life today is very alarming in drug cases, fights, free sex, sexual violence, and murder committed by perpetrators of sexual violence. The moral decline of adolescents today is considered a failure of educational institutions to develop good character in Indonesian youth as distinguished generation. Besides, we can also observe the decreasing understanding of religious values and the virtues of noble characters. The cause of moral decline often occurs because of poor attention of parents so that children feel neglected. Another major cause of the breakdown of parents' role that youth undergo moral decline is the development of the age or the influence of globalisation that has overrun Indonesia. Many negative impacts have been brought, in addition to the positive impacts that accompany them. Raden Mas Tarjudin (2014) agrees with Hidayah and writes his opinion on Kompasiana, discussing on television, newspapers, social networking on the Internet, and other media about the moral of today's students. Many problems occur among students in our current education. The cause of moral damage to current students according to observers of education is due to lack of moral education, mental formation, and character so that young people do not have a guidance in life. Debroo (2015) discussed the same reality as it was written in the article of Indonesia's Young Generation of

Crisis Identity. The young generation of Indonesia has experienced moral degradation. The younger generation is increasingly apathetic towards the social conditions of society. Many are following the principle of hedonism which considers the pleasure and pleasure of matter are the ultimate purposes of life. The adolescent lifestyle that includes consumerism, the need for appreciation and recognition make young people lose their common sense and dare to act recklessly by taking action against the law to fulfil their wishes. Indonesia is one of the target market for cigarettes, liquor or alcohol, and drugs from abroad. Indonesia needs and awaits a young generation who is ready to commit and dedicate to the progress of the nation. Technological advancement keeps young people trapped in an instant and anti-social life. Youth become less interacting with their social environment and more interested in cyberspace. Indonesia is the fourth most populated country in the world with many social, moral, and economic problems. We urgently need community transformation.

## **INCARNATIONAL LIVING MINISTRY**

Serving God in a Christian university as a lecturer<sup>1</sup>, I believe that we should and could give an accountable response and continue serving our society with more effective urban ministries, which will transform Indonesia and youth generation to become a healthy and blessed generation for the nation. Also, as a principal in a Christian school<sup>2</sup>, I think one suitable model of urban ministries is incarnational living, meaning to be a part of the community, in which we serve, and focus on at-risk children. We realise that the city environment appears to be more hostile and leaves no room for educational and character building for children. I was inspired by what Jesus Christ did while He was on this earth. Wherever He went to teach, He always ministered the people and transformed their lives. Reflecting upon my Savior's life and ministry has given me the idea to start a ministry which applies service learning for social transformation. Firstly, we see clearly the need to help young people rise from moral decline to social transformation. Secondly, the state of our young generation is in an emergency crisis and needs help. Thirdly, as educational institutions

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<sup>1</sup>Petra Christian University at Siwalankerto 121-131 Surabaya-Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup>Pelangi Kristus Christian School at Jemur Andayani XXII -4 Surabaya-Indonesia.

are engaged in education, we have the opportunity to perform effective transformational services to help younger generations.

Paul Gieschen (2005)<sup>3</sup> agrees with the view that children who are joyfully and consistently in ministry can help children develop Christ-like character. Serving those who need the love of God is one of the most effective learning processes to develop Christ-like character. Gieschen (2005) recommends that in educational process it is important to design a spiritual training with activities that enable students to be involved in mission. The students can learn how to show love and take care of others. Gieschen also asserts that building character can actually be done only by the Holy Spirit. However, doing mission is a ministry towards God's heart.

Lingenfelter & Mayers (2002-2017) stated:

a working definition of *incarnational ministry* is “the immersion of one’s self into a local culture and ‘becoming Jesus’ to that culture.” Incarnational ministry seeks to dispense with ministry “from a distance” and embrace ministry “up close and personal”—the love of God and the gospel of Christ are “incarnated” or embodied by the person ministering. Just as the Son of God took on human flesh and came into our world, we should adopt the culture to which we are ministering and “become Jesus” within it.<sup>4</sup>

A central tenant of the incarnational ministry concept is “live the good news rather than preach the good news.” The Christian understanding of the word *incarnation* is that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”.<sup>5</sup> We are to be Christlike. We are followers and learners of Jesus. We are to communicate His love to the world. In incarnational ministry, there is an emphasis on being engaged with people and living a life of Christlikeness. This incarnational living ministry is modelling the traces of the Ministry of how Jesus Christ ministered the people while He was on the earth. According to the Bible, Philippians 2:5-9<sup>6</sup>,

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1. <sup>3</sup> P. Gieschen (2005) *Faith in Action, Helping Students Develop a Heart for God's Mission*. ACSI, Colorado Springs.

<sup>4</sup>Lingenfelter & Mayers (2002-2017) *Ministering Cross-Culturally 2d-ed: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*.<https://www.gotquestions.org/incarnational-ministry.html>

<sup>5</sup>The Bible, John 1:14 New International Version (NIV) The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>6</sup>“New International Version (NIV) 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; 7 rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being © 2017 Magdalena Pranata Santoso. All rights reserved.

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He, who has become a servant and become just like humans, ministering to sinners: those who live in evil and whose lives are in vain. This ministry of Jesus Christ is referred to as the incarnational ministry, as a means for the educational process to carry out a social transformation for younger generations of Indonesia. The incarnational living ministry that a Christian school can do is employing an educational curriculum that provides the way for all students to serve the community, primarily the younger generation, focusing on children aged four to fourteen. We apply the following three aspects of the ministry of incarnation: firstly, the students of Pelangi Kristus Christian School from grade six to grade twelve, will serve the children as an expression of love to God and them. The students appreciate the lives of the children they serve. Our students help the children and serve them in a true sense of identity, so the children would not cover their lives with hedonism and consumerism. On the other hand, they will find that the true identity as God's creation is very valuable, that they are precious before God and they have their uniqueness. Therefore, in this pattern of incarnational ministry, each of our students will show love and appreciation to every child they serve, and give new meaning to their identity because of the Mighty God who created them. Secondly, every child should serve the children who come from different backgrounds. Aspects of differences include age, ethnicity, religion and culture. That is why our students must be ready to let go of their status and pride. They learn to be open and respect differences. They learn to see different backgrounds and statuses with sincerity and show genuine kindness and appreciation. Our students apply the principle of the incarnational living ministry by imitating Jesus Christ who does not see men as an object but as a precious subject and beloved ones. Our students learn to love the children whom they serve as they love themselves. Here are some concrete things done by our students. Before serving the children, they prepare the learning materials according to the age of the children. Our students will add lesson material by giving real examples from their lives. Our students realise that they are not only serving and teaching the children, but they also set an example through their words, attitudes, and deeds. They always pray for every child they serve, because they believe that only God can

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made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name,”

transform the human heart. The students understand that they can only serve the children with God's blessing. Before entering the classroom for the teaching and learning process, they invite the children to play together or read books, so that the children experience friendly friendship. Therefore, the learning atmosphere becomes comfortable, and the children can learn happily. Although the age differences between the students and the children are not significant, the children can show respect to our students. The children learn well, and they diligently follow the learning process held every Friday for 90 minutes from 3.30pm to 05.00pm. Our students also provide snacks and small gifts to give appreciation to the children who learn with passion and perseverance. Our students also apply classroom discipline. Not only do they show the attitude of being serious teachers, but they also treat the children as siblings. In the learning process, our students apply competitions, games, and teaching creativity that help the children understand the material well. Finally, all the disciples should learn to have a motivation in their hearts and a clear purpose that they are serving the children as they serve the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

## **APPLYING THE INCARNATIONAL LIVING MINISTRY AS SERVICE LEARNING**

There are three aspects of the Incarnational Living Ministry. First aspect that becomes a curriculum in this Service Learning is a spiritual aspect. The goal is that every child who receives this social transformation through the incarnational ministry by the students is increasingly aware that the life given by God is valuable. The children will grow with the awareness and knowledge that since life is precious and given by God, they should not waste it by filling it with wrong things. The second aspect is the moral aspect. The children have an awareness that obeying God's truth is a necessity for the good of their lives. Living the values of good morality is a good thing for themselves and others. Necessity to do good and right things also grows in a responsible attitude toward life by not destroying life with negative things. It awakens the spirit to be a healthy and morally healthy young generation by avoiding violence, sexual immorality, and drug addiction. The third aspect is the intellectual aspect. The children have the belief that every child gets the talents from God the Creator. Every child has a clear and strong motivation to develop self-potential positively. They may have

the basic and strong motivation for a meaningful purpose of life, and they can dedicate their lives to the family, community, and the nation Indonesia. We have applied the principles of the UNESCO's Five Pillars of Education<sup>7</sup> as well as developed basic life skills from United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's curriculum. We chose the UNESCO's curriculum and follow The Regional Handbook on Life Skills Programmes for Non-formal Education. On The Development of NFE Skills in UNESCO's curriculum<sup>8</sup>, there is one point that can be applied for the children, which includes the five areas of learning need, identifying family life and responsibility. The learning objectives are the children will be able to explain the family members and their responsibilities as well as describe the five ways of expressing empathy, etc. The students elaborate the unit in contextual skills, generic skills, and literacy skills. We believe that following a good curriculum will reach the purpose of this incarnational living ministry for social transformation among the children as youth generation. We believe that this curriculum can answer the needs of young generation that they may be able to face the challenge of the modern life values. Using this curriculum, we believe that the children can grow as a better young generation who develop good intellectual aspect and strongly hold the moral and spiritual values. Our high school students serve the children in a learning process on the weekend. They serve the children in poor communities living around our school. The students go to places around our school where they meet families of low-income. They are invited to come to our school every weekend. We allow them to use our school library that they may read many good books and literature. The children can also join several activities and training to equip their lives with something better and more valuable. The students implement UNESCO's curriculum that integrates students' learning process in literacy, contextual and generic skill in a well-proportioned way. In this

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<sup>7</sup>*Learning to Know* – the development of skills and knowledge needed to function in this world e.g. formal acquisition of literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and general knowledge. *Learning to DO* – the acquisition of applied skills linked to professional success. *Learning to Live Together* – the development of social skills and values such as respect and concern for others, and the appreciation of cultural diversity. *Learning to BE* – the learning that contributes to a person's mind, body, and spirit. Skills include creativity and personal discovery, acquired through reading, the Internet, and activities such as sports and arts. *Learning to Transform Oneself and Society* – when individuals and groups gain knowledge, develop skills, and acquire new values as a result of learning, they are equipped with tools and mindsets for creating lasting change in organizations, communities, and societies. <https://souham.wordpress.com/a-a-prologue/>.

<sup>8</sup>Regional Handbook on Life Skills Programmes for Non-formal Education (UNESCO Bangkok, Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. 2012)60. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002175/217507e.pdf>.

incarnation living ministry, the students can make friends and show God's love and care for the children as their new friends. Furthermore, these four to fourteen-year-old children can have a process of education and learning experiences for social transformation, such as computer skills, English, Mathematics, drawing, painting, arts and crafts. Also, the students educate them to utilize electronic devices for positive purpose, such as listening to good music, and watch some educational videos and films, etc. Our school teachers also participate in this ministry by teaching some health and sex education according to the students' age. All these services, learning process, and activities have a purpose for the children, that they may have something better and precious for their future lives, so they may be transformed and have better values and character.

Our students are applying the incarnation living ministry to children outside our school environment. This ministry can give positive impacts on the students themselves. Through this ministry, the students can finally develop their leadership competence as they serve and lead the children as their younger brothers and sisters. They learn to make plans, develop ideas, give positive influences, be role models, develop courage, and build relationship with others. They also learn to solve problems and make decisions. The students made personal reflections on this service learning process at Christian Leadership Class. In our school, the students study about Christian Leadership program from grade seven to grade twelve as an essential part of the school curriculum. Thence, the students who are serving the children can gain many benefits for their learning process. The students will experience the process of growing in understanding about Christian Leadership not only in a concept, but also in a concrete process. Besides, they are growing in their character and personality, regarding patience, sincerity, kindness, attention, diligence, and creativity. While doing their preparation in this service learning, they also learn how to share money, invest time, and make friends. By serving them, the students can certainly learn how to take care and show compassion for other children's needs as well. Not only the students, but the teachers also serve the mothers who are accompanying their children by discussing the children's education, improving their skills and competencies so that they may have more entrepreneurial spirit to improve their economic life.



## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

We began this ministry since 2010 with 10 children after 8 years, now it has reached approximately 120 children from several areas around the school. Doing incarnational living ministry as service learning can be an effective process education for social transformation for the children. Those children as at-risk generation would be transformed to become a better-valued generation. By God's blessing, we can see that those children are blessed and growing intellectually, mentally, emotionally also spiritually. After following this service learning process, most of the children reached excellent academic achievements. They also made progress in their learning motivation. Also, we can notice the cessation of bad habits such as dirty words, disrespectful behaviors, rebellion against authority, laziness, and gadget addiction. The parents of the children testify that the children's behaviour now is more positive compared to the moment before they attended the service learning program. By teaching the value of morality in every learning process, the children produce positive results. Therefore, the children's parents also want to follow the Children Education program provided by the school teachers. We have expanded the service area not only in the school area but also elsewhere near the school. The expansion of this area occurs because the surrounding community has seen benefits for the children served by our school. Other parent communities ask our students to serve younger children who can not visit our school. In the last two years, we have successfully started two areas around school with children aged four to six. The number of children who attend service learning in each area is around 20-25 children. Our students get a large room from the neighbourhood. Later, we plan and give a recommendation to develop a synergy between schools and universities for this service learning. In the synergy of schools and universities, lecturers of a university can also do service learning by serving the parents of the children who attend the learning service programs undertaken by the school. Working with students from nearby campuses can have a positive impact. Children with their families may get more attention, love, and better services. Children will be more confident that their lives are valuable because they are loved and get so many benefits that have direct impacts on the learning process in school. This synergy will definitely give positive impacts. Service learning can be one solution to the reality of moral degradation that threatens the young generation of Indonesia. This ministry could be a new hope to answer the moral crisis

that hit the young generation. With God's grace, service learning can be a tool of social transformation through the incarnation living ministry.

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## About the writer:

The writer, Magdalena Pranata Santoso, 61 years, married, have one son, a Christian educator, has been serving God at Petra Christian University, Indonesia, since 1985 as a lecturer for several subjects, as follows: Christian Ethics, Christian Leadership, and Christian Education. Since 2010, she has been trusted to be the Coordinator of Center for Servant Leadership, and since 2016, the Dean of Faculty of Teacher Education. In 1996, she founded a Christian school for children ministry for students aged three to eighteen with a mission to equip the students to become God's ambassadors who will accomplish God's calling for His Kingdom's sake. Her education background: M.A. in Theology (1980); M.Sc. in Religion and Sociology (1995); and D. Min. in Leadership and Christian Education Ministry (2010).